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TO A GIRL DANCING

BY

GEORGE STERLING



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TO A GIRL DANCING

BY GEORGE STERLING

*Has the wind called you sister? —
Sister to Kypris, who, as the far foam kissed her,
Rose exquisite and white.
For seeing you, we dream of all swift things
And of the swallow's flight, —
Of sea-birds drifting on untroubled wings,
And incense swaying at the shrine of kings,
In gossamers of violascent light.
In what Sicilian meadows, cool with dew,
Ran rosier girls than you,
With tresses dancing free,
To tell how beautiful the world might be?
In what high days unborn
Will sheerer loveliness go forth at morn,
To wave a brief farewell to night's last star?
For you, we envy not the lost and far,
As now you make our day
As happy and imperial as they.*



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More than the ripple of grass and waters flowing,—
More than the panther's grace
Or poppy touched by winds from sunset blowing,
Your limbs in rapture trace
An evanescent pattern on the sight—
Beauty that lives an instant, to become
A sister beauty and a new delight.
So full you feed the heart that hearts are dumb.
Those little hands set back the hands of time,
Till we remember what the world has dreamed,
In her own clime,
Of Beauty, and her tides that ebb and flow
Around old islands where her face has gleamed,
The marvelous mirage of long ago.

Ah! more than voice hath said
They speak of revels fled—
The alabastine and exultant thighs,
The vine-encircled head,
The rose-face lifted, lyric, to the skies,
The loins by leaping roses garlanded.
The sandaled years return,
The lamps of Eros burn,
The flowers of Circe nod,
And one may dream of other days and lands,

Of other girls that touch unresting hands —
Sad sirens of the god,
To some forgotten tune
Swaying their silvern hips below the moon.
Dance on, for dreams they are indeed,
A vision set afar,
But you with warm, immediate beauty plead,
And fragrant is your footfall on our star.

O flesh made music in its ecstasy,
Sing to us ere an end of song shall be!
O fair things young and fleet!
White flower of floating feet!
Be glad! Be glad! for happiness is holy!
Be glad awhile, for on the greensward slowly
Summer and autumn pass,
With shadows on the grass,
Till in the meadow lowly
November's tawny reeds shall sigh "Alas!"
Dear eyes,
What see you on the azure of the skies?
Enchanted, eager face,
Seek you young Love in his eternal place?
Round arms upflung, what is it you would clasp—
What far-off lover?

Hands that a moment hover,
What hands unseen evade awhile your grasp?
Ah! that is best: to seek but not to find him,
For found and loved the seasons yet will blind him
To this true heaven you are —
That moth unworthy of your soul's white star.
Dance on, and dream of better things than he!
Dance on, translating us the mortal's guess
At Beauty and her immortality —
Yourself your flesh-clad art and loveliness.

Dance, for the time comes when the dance is done
And feet no longer run
On paths of rapture leading from the day.
Release not now
The vine that you have bound about your brow:
Dance, granting us awhile that we forget
How morrows but delay,
Yet come as surely as their own regret.
Through you the Past is ours,
Through you the Future flow'rs,
In you their dreams and happiness are met.
Through you we find again
That birth of bliss and pain,
That thing of joy and tears and hope and laughter

That men call youth —
A greater thing than truth,
A fairer thing than fame
In songs hereafter,
A miracle, an unreturning flame,
The season for itself alone worthy living,
And needing not our patience nor forgiving.

O heart that knows enough, and yet must learn
The wisdom that we spurn!
The years at last will teach you:
May now no whisper reach you
Of noons when pleading of the flutes shall cease
And not for rapture will you beg, but peace.
To-day it seems too harsh that you should know
How soon the wreaths must go
And those flower-mating feet
Be gathered, even as flowers, by cruel Time,
Their flashing rhyme
No more to mingle with the blood's wild beat.
Dance, with no wind to chill your perfect grace,
Nor shadow on your face,
Nor voice to call to unenduring rest
The limbs delighting and the naked breast.

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